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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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PAUL AND SILAS

IN THE Philippi PRISON OF ~~THYATIRA~~.

I propose to read, and accompany with some remarks, that passage which begins with the 16th verse of the 16th chapter of Acts:

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days."

It was the custom of the apostle, in every city where he was (and there was almost no city in the civilized world in which there were not large numbers of his own countrymen), to resort, on Sabbath days and others, at the appointed times, to the synagogues, for prayer. He maintained the usages of his people. All the early Christians did. There was no difference between the disciples of Christ and the ordinary Jewish people, except that the disciples superadded to the regular worship of their nation the service and the faith which referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor were there churches in Judea until after the destruction of the temple and the altar worship.

Paul, being in a foreign or Grecian city, was beset, on his way to prayer from day to day, by a soothsaying woman. Precisely what we are to understand here by *soothsayer* does not appear. It was the opinion of the early fathers or commentators that it included ventriloquism; but that she was one of those who had also the spirit of divination, the art of seeing what ordinarily people could not see, or of telling what ordinarily people could not find out by the use of their senses; that she was one of those who had that apparently abnormal power which we see still developed in our time—second sight, clairvoyance, magnetism, whatever may be the meaning of those terms—that she was one who had that strange, indefinable, and as yet unascertained power or faculty, there can be no reasonable doubt.

There are those who undertake to say that there is nothing but

SUNDAY EVENING, November 24, 1872. LESSON: Matt. xxv. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 223, 705, 1251.

fancy in these things—that they have no foundation in fact. That all that is claimed is to be conceded, I do not believe for a moment; and that the causes alleged are the real causes of the phenomena, I do not pretend to say; but, that when you shall have made ever so much exception for deceit, for collusion, and for illusion, there is a large residuum of fact that is genuine, though not as yet explainable, I do not doubt. That it has existed from age to age, and that, in some ages, for some reasons, though not necessarily by any increase of inspiration, it has had special development, I think there can be no doubt. And that this case was one of that class, there can be as little doubt.

This woman was a slave. Her "masters," as it is translated here—her owners—went with her. She, possessing either the art of amusing the crowd by her ventriloquial gift, or else some clairvoyant power—something, at any rate, which aroused curiosity,—was their stock in trade; and they went with her, probably, from city to city, and made much gain by her.

When she saw Paul, moved by some spirit, I know not what, by some influence, I know not what, she cried out, in regard to him and those who were with him:

"These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days."

This was a testimony, and it was a true testimony; and by that token she showed that it was not altogether an illusion and a lie under which she labored; and that when she interpreted the nature and spirit of these men she hit it right, while she would not have been likely to hit it right, if it had been pure illusion.

"But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

The question at once arises, Since this woman had discerned and borne testimony to the divinity that was in the servants of the Most High, and since she was disposed to vindicate their character and their mission, why should the apostle have been grieved—why he should not have addressed the crowd, and said, "She bears a true testimony"?

I answer: Paul was one who loved sound, healthy human nature. He could not, from any considerations of curiosity or of self-interest, witness with complacency any distortion, any abnormal or unwholesome condition, whether it benefited him or not. There was nothing nobler in his sight than a right-minded man or woman; and discerning here a condition which he did not regard as normal, he could not but disapprove it. The Jews were educated to abhor all this class of gifts. They denounced them;

and made it a crime to meddle with such things; and Paul, with the instinct not only of his education, but of the love of manliness which he had all his life long showed in himself, and which he also showed by his sympathy, took sides with the woman as she should be, against the woman as she was; and, like a noble and lofty spirit, he scorned any transient or momentary compliment of the spirit within her, and said, "Come out of her"—evidently regarding it as an intrusive spirit of evil; and so she was healed.

Now, when her owners saw that she was healed; when they saw this poor creature whose mind had been distorted restored to health; when they saw the spirit of evil cast out of her, with what eyes did they look upon her? It is not to be supposed that these men really disliked to see a virtuous, upright, intelligent person. No doubt, if they had gone into a great assembly where there was, on the platform, a person showing traits of royal manhood, they would have admired him; and when the crowd broke out in plaudits, doubtless they would have been as enthusiastic as any of the rest. In all probability, they liked virtue, and they liked manliness. Very likely they were devotees in their own religion. I presume they were persons who, in their way, contemplated with approval obedience to the laws, and reverence for God. It may be presumed that there were times when these men felt a strong admiration for saintship. It could not be said, in a general way, that they did not like healthy manhood and healthy womanhood. Abstractly they did. They did concretely. They did, when their interests were not involved. But this woman was their stock in trade, and they had never been accustomed to look upon her except in her money-producing aspects. They had lost sight of all that belonged to her but her commercial value. And when the apostle destroyed that, he struck the chord of avarice in them, and not that of admiration for the higher qualities of womanhood. So they were exceedingly angry. They had no objection to men's going from a lower state to a higher, or to Christ's practicing his power on other people's slaves and instruments; but they were making money, and here were good bargains knocked in the head. Here was a daily and weekly revenue scattered by the breath of the apostle's voice; and they looked at the matter purely from a commercial point of view.

Now, there are hundreds of men destroying their fellow-men, in this city and the great city near us. They turn the lusts and appetites of their fellow-men to their own account; and if those lusts and appetites were quenched, they would have nothing to do. They are making money out of the infirmities, the weaknesses, or the wickednesses of their fellow-men.

But it is not to be supposed that these men are monsters in the sense of hating mankind. Now and then there may be such; but you will find among bad men many good-natured fellows. You will hear them say, in respect to some comrade, "Luke has been to a Methodist meeting lately, and he is doing better; and I am glad of it." You will hear them say of some other, "He is not so bad as you take him to be. He will come out all right yet." They do not enjoy having persons ruin themselves—oh, no! if there are not too many Lukes; but let the Methodist meeting sweep all their customers away, and destroy their profits, and you will see something very different. Then they will oppose the reformation of men with all their might. Why? Because they have an abstract objection to the reformation of men, or because they hate goodness? Oh, no! Because they look upon the circle of their customers purely in the light of business. It is so much money to them, and they do not want to lose their money. When you take them in their better moments; when their benevolence, whatever there is of it, is in the ascendency; and when their good nature sits in judgment,—they form a very different opinion from that which they form when their avarice is awake, and they look upon men simply as instruments of their gain and profit.

So, when Paul had exorcised the evil spirit from this poor damsel, he saw in her, disenchanted, weakened, without any special end or purpose in life, one who had now a chance of faith, and reverence, and love, and obedience, and holy living, and happy dying, and immortality; but her owners looked upon her and said, "She is good for nothing; she is spoiled;" and, pointing out the apostle, they said, "There is the man that spoiled her." And Paul said, "I have saved her;" and her owners said, "You have ruined her." Paul said, "Now she is an heir of eternal riches;" and her owners said, "She is not worth a snap." Thus differently they looked upon the same facts in the same person.

Well, it is not to be supposed that you can pluck the lamb out of the lion's jaw and have the lion thank you for it. You cannot take a victim away from a man who is making use of it for selfish purposes without waking up the man's resentment.

So these men proceeded to—what? beat Paul? No—oh, no. When bad men are checked, hindered, in their wrong courses, and they undertake to obtain some relief, they invariably plead the public good. When bad men in New York are arrested and stopped in their notorious business, they say, "This invasion of individual rights, if carried out, is going to ruin the foundation of our liberty." Those sharks who destroy thousands and thousands of

emigrants protest, when at last the law is framed by which they are restrained from any longer stripping these poor creatures, that it is a violation of the constitution. You will hear men, when the law lays its hand on the establishments where they are voluntarily violating public decency and virtue, all that is good and wholesome in morality, and all that is noble in patriotism, say—what? "I have a right to be wicked, I have a right to damn my soul, I have a right to be a liar, a gambler, a prize-fighter, or a grog-seller, I have a right to destroy men that want to be destroyed, I have a right to fight my dogs, I have a right to promote cock-fighting, if I please"? Oh, no! that is not what they say. They take an extra glass of drink, and talk of the interference of magistrates with the inherent rights of the people! They do not believe in such interference! And the owners of this woman were not very different from modern bad men in this respect.

"When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews,"—

Ah! that touched the prejudice against foreigners. It was then as it was ten or fifteen years ago, when a man was brought before a mob, and it was said, "This is an abolitionist." That was enough, in those times of excitement, and in some places, to turn the people against a man, and make them mad, and stir them up to mob him.

"They caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city."

The public peace is disturbed! Excitement is produced! Dissension is awakened! Annoyance is occasioned! Tribulation on tribulation is caused!

"And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."

Here was a charge of foreign intrusion and of unlawful doctrines subverting patriotism and law. The fact was, Paul had cast the devil out of the woman, and the charge was that he had brought the devil into the city, destroying all that was good and beautiful.

Men do not dare to fight under their own colors, but they make believe that they are doing so. There is talk about hypocrisy in the Church. Of course there is some hypocrisy in the Church; there is insincerity among good people; but I tell you, there are no such hypocrites in this world as are to be found among the base, the low, the vile. And these men were arrant hypocrites. They were making pretense of fostering the national good. They deemed this to be the best method of gaining their point, and at the same time

shielding themselves. These craftsmen were in danger of losing their craft, if Paul preached that there was no true God but Jehovah and Jesus. So they were bound, if possible, to put him down ; but they wanted to do it in such a way that the responsibility should not fall on them.

Of course, as these prisoners were dragged before the rulers,—the magistrates, the judges,—they said to their accusers, "Let us hear these charges." Of course they said to the masters of the damsel, "Now make your allegation. Where is your proof?" Of course they conformed, in their decision, to the law. Of course, if the prisoners were found guilty, they were punished according to the enormity of their guilt ; but if no case was made out against them, of course they let them go free. Oh, no ! not at all.

"The multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely."

They were incarcerated, to await their trial.

Ah ! there is never a successful riot, that there is not some leader. You will never find a mob, that there is not some respectable man coiled up behind them, who sets them on.

When the Massachusetts Sixth regiment went through Baltimore, at the beginning of the great rebellion, they were pelted, stoned, clubbed, until at last patience was exhausted, and they were ordered to defend themselves. The moment they were commanded to fire, a tall Yankee, who had seen a respectable-looking man hounding the people on, and keeping himself at what he supposed to be a safe distance, stepped out of the ranks, and fired at him, instead of the poor wretches about him, and down he fell like a shot pigeon from his roost !

Now, that Yankee was a philosopher. He said to himself, "These poor wretches are not responsible. There is the responsible man. He belongs to the respectable class, and does not mean to get hurt himself, nor to have his name and character involved in this affair. It is he that is urging forward these ignorant, degraded fellows. They are the ones that are throwing the stones, but he is the one that is to blame. Therefore, I am going to shoot, not them, but him." It was a very characteristic thing for a Yankee soldier to do.

And that was not the whole of it. Three or four years afterward, I heard the other side of the story. I was in Baltimore lecturing, and was talking over the scenes of the rebellion in a Methodist family where I was stopping ; and the master of the house, who was a patriot, said, in the course of the conversation,

"Our church, at the beginning of the war, lost a very prominent and valuable man." "Ah!" said I, "how was that?" "He was looking on at the passage of soldiers through the city, and was standing on the side of the crowd, and some stray shot hit him, and killed him."

And thus, after three or four years had elapsed, I got what was lacking to make the fact complete. Here was a man, a member of the church, belonging to respectable society, but violent in his feelings, hating the North, and sympathizing with the South; and when these soldiers were marching through the city, instead of going among the boys, and taking his chance, he stood aside, and set them on, and the Yankee saw him; and when the order came to fire, he did fire, and fired to some purpose!

You will never see a riot or a mob break out, that there will not be some magistrate, some respectable man, some leader, somewhere, hounding the people on. They get the blows and bruises, as a general thing, and he shields himself, or conveys himself away, and laughs in his sleeve to think how nicely he has done it, and how little he has had the responsibility of it. It is always worth while to find out who are the real miscreants, the leaders, in such cases.

So the magistrates caused Paul and Silas to be beaten. They probably did not beat them with their own hands. They commanded others to beat them. They were cruelly beaten, untried and uncondemned, in the open market-place, where the people were assembled; and after they had been beaten, they were hustled into prison, and the jailor was ordered to put them in the innermost prison, and keep them safely. The Roman law was, that if a prisoner escaped, the keeper should suffer a penalty, of fine or death. According to directions, Paul and Silas were put into the innermost ward of the prison, and their feet were put in the stocks.

Now, a Roman prison was a most disagreeable place. There are not many prisons anywhere that are very inviting. When folks build jails and prisons, they do not generally think much about humanity. The moment a man commits a crime, people vote that he is a pest, and treat him like one. I do not think you would have to go far to find gross abuses heaped, by officers of the law, on men who are wrong-doers, to be sure, but none the less men —abuses that would have been atrocious under the most barbaric government Rome ever had. We can somewhat apologize for the prisons of that early age, when there were fewer means of reformation, if they were built rudely and strongly and only for strength.

but there is no excuse for the prisons of civilized nations at this age of the world, if they are not better. And yet, prisons, and jails, and houses of detention for witnesses, and poor-houses, are often the most hideous sores on civilization. Within a half day's travel of Brooklyn there are villages where men, for no other crime than insanity, are kept, summer and winter, almost stark naked, their food being pushed in to them through holes. They live in their own filth, and are more like wild howling beasts than like human beings. Such is the state of things on this continent, and only a few hours distant from this metropolis of civilization!

We are not to suppose that Greek and Roman prisons were worse than the worst of ours; but they were not much better. Paul and Silas did not go up golden steps to higher seats. They were strangers, and were marked as followers of Christ, and were cruelly beaten,—suffering, doubtless, from the violence of the mob,—and were hustled to prison, and their feet were put in the stocks, and there they were.

These men might very well have chaffered with each other. Silas might have said to Paul, "You led me into this trouble. If you had listened to me, we should have escaped all this." And Paul might have said to Silas, "I am not any more in fault than you are." They might have blamed each other. Or, both of them might have said, "If we get out of this, you won't catch us in another such scrape." Or, they might have railed at the magistrates, or the crowd. Or, they might have sulked and said nothing. But they did neither of these things.

The darkness of night was about them. They were in a cold and dreary prison. Their feet were fastened in the stocks, and they were unable to lie down and sleep, or to comfortably sit up. But they were suffering, consciously, in a good cause. And what was their conduct? At midnight they wakened the echoes of the prison with one of the melodies of the old Hebrew Psalms. It is said:

"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them."

Sang praises? What had they to praise God for? You cannot put a devout and reverent man on any phase of experience, that he will not find argument for praise to God. They had not, in the old Hebrew time, any such hymns as we have now-a-days; but Paul and Silas sang, chanted, some brave old hymns. And what must have been the sensations, the thoughts and the feelings, of those men, that they could praise God in song just after they had passed from liberty to the dungeon, and from honor to dishonor?

Oh, I tell you, here is your bridge of gold, that has stood now many ages—the hymns of consolation that brave hearts have sung; that have been sung by men in prisons and mountain fastnesses; by men that had lost everything; by men on whom had been heaped all mannner of contumely; by men under every condition of trouble and trial.

What did Paul and Silas sing? It may be that they sang the 116th Psalm. I will read it. See if it would not sound well in any jail.

"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple; I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

What sentences those were to ring out from the cell of these two Hebrews, who doubtless sang them in the language of their fathers!

It is said, in simple eloquence, that "the prisoners heard them." That old shock-headed, red-headed fellow, who was put in for murder, and lay in the corner, more like a wolf than like a man, and had been snoring, opened his eyes, and looked around to see what disturbed him; and, if they sang in Greek, wondered what men could find to praise God for, at midnight, in such a place as that. The various other criminals, too, looked up, and with blank amazement marveled at the singing of Paul and Silas in the dark and in prison.

That was a sublime spectacle. But there was something more sublime yet; for just then a miracle took place. The foundations of the prison began to swing; the walls began to crack and totter; the door sprang open; and the men found their bonds loosed, their feet released from the stocks, and the fastenings lying around about them. There was an earthquake. What a time, what a place, that was, for men to roll out the melody of such a psalm as this!

The prisoners sat still, amazed, enchanted as it were. The jailer awoke out of a deep sleep; and seeing how things were—seeing that all was still, that no men were in the court, that no fugitives were flying—said, "I have been asleep, they are all gone,

and I am a dead man;" and he drew his sword, and was about to make way with himself, when Paul (who never had so much presence of mind as when he was in extreme emergencies), called out to him, and said:

"Do thyself no harm; for we are all here."

And the jailer *sprang in* (that is the expression), to be sure that it was so.

"Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awakening out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried, with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in."

He glanced around, to see if those on whose keeping his very life depended were all there.

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas."

Here was the keeper, abasing himself to those whom he kept. Here was the prisoner, master of the jailer. Here was the last first, and the first last.

Under these circumstances, it might be supposed that the jailer would have thanked these men, and said, "You have behaved like gentlemen, all of you;" and clapped on their chains again, and fixed them the best way he could, and bolted the door, and said, "I shan't sleep any more to-night," and sat and watched; but many a man in a rude business has a big heart under his jacket. It is not always that we find low feelings in a rude business, and it is not always that we find elevated feelings in a refined business; and there was a streak of nobility in this jailer. When he heard the songs of these men in the prison, and saw their countenances, and thought of their fidelity to him, his mind was impressed that they were men of God; and he fell down at their feet. He had a sense of God near to him, of his own sinfulness, and of his danger.

"And he brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

He was a suppliant. The thing had gone to his conscience. He felt that he had not been living right. He had doubtless committed some crimes; but, after all, there was a foundation left in him for reformation; and his first thought was a manly, noble one, —"What shall I do to be saved?"

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."

That is, they sat down and taught him who Christ was, and

why he came into the world, and how he had suffered, and wherefore he had died, and how he had been raised up by the power of God, and how he had ascended into heaven, and how he now had forgiveness of sins for all those who trusted in him and believed in his name.

"And he took them, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

He was baptized, I do not care how. I do not think they sprinkled him or immersed him; but he was as really baptized as though they had sprinkled him or immersed him. I think all he had to do was to give some outward evidence that he was converted, and he did. He washed their stripes; and that was an external sign that the work of Christ was going on in his heart. So long as a man bears testimony to the grace of God in his soul, it is immaterial whether he does it in this, that, or the other way.

"And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house."

There is a little after-scene which I always admired very much; it is such a beautiful contrast to the sweetness, and faith, and love of this great soul, Paul:

"When it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying [for it seems they had thought the matter over during the night], Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this, saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go; now, therefore, depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beat us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out."

He would not stir a step—brave, noble, admirable Paul! He was not one of those men whose idea of meekness was utter absence of any pride or feeling of true manhood. He had rebound in him. You could not strike him and not produce a reaction.

"The sergeants told these words unto the magistrates, and they feared when they heard that they were Romans."

Probably the sergeants ran back, out of breath, and, coming into the presence of the magistrates, said, "Do you know what you have done? Do you know who these men are? They are *Romans*, and they say they won't go, and that you have got to come and take them out! You had better look out for yourselves! You have been beating and imprisoning *Romans*. I would not like to be in your places."

The magistrates were thoroughly scared; and they put on their hats quickly, and went and took them out, begging them to go.

"They came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

Oh! how great the change!

"And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen their brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

There are only three things, now, that I want to say.

First, when you trace back a narrative like this in Scripture, take pains to look at it in the light in which it actually existed. The Bible contains narratives that are of the profoundest interest, and dramatic to the last degree; and we are accustomed to read them without thinking how beautiful they are—without entering into their spirit. There are very few dramas more piquant and beautiful than many of the scenes which have been worn smooth by being told and read to us from our childhood up, so that we cease to care anything about them. It would be well for you to read your Bibles more deeply. When engravers have put the plate on the press so many times, and made so many impressions, that the surface of the steel is worn, and the lines are dull, they sometimes go over them, and deepen the lines, and sharpen the edges; and then the impressions are nearly as good as those which were struck off when the plate was new. Now, the Bible wants sharpening, so to speak, that the impressions which it makes upon our minds may be stronger; and this sharpening is to be effected by the care with which we read its pages.

I have one word to say in regard to the triumph of these men in the midst of their adversities. Let no man who is in trouble despond. Let no man who seems overthrown, in any way, give up his hope, and feel that he is abandoned of God. Let no men who are beaten by the mob, and hustled by the magistrates into prison, with manacles on their hands, and their feet in the stocks, forget to pray, and sing praises to God. There is a great remedy for those who are cast down. He who rests his soul upon God, no matter how dark the sky, no matter how severe the storm may be, shall be saved. No man shall be lost who puts his trust in the power of God and the love of Christ.

Finally, let me say a word in respect to the jailer. When men have been living a godless life, and they hear the truth as it is in Jesus, it is time for them to act. The moment when it is first made known to them, they should fashion their life in accordance with it.

If there are those who have come into this house to-night, godless men, far from living right, knowing that they ought to live differently; if anything in the teachings of God's Word has stirred their conscience in them; if they have been awakened to the feeling that their lives ought to be reformed, now is the time for them to begin to change their course. The jailer, when he saw the work of God in the deliverance of his servants, came in, trembling, fell

down before them, and said, "What shall I do to be saved," and when the spirit of God touches your conscience and feelings, your first question should be, "What shall I do?" This question ought to come from your lips or heart as quick as the ball from a rifle. A man does not need to take six months and go through all the stages of conviction into Christianity. A man does not need, under such circumstances, to take an hour to ponder. How long does it take a man, when he sees the building in which he lives on fire, to decide to jump? How long does it take a man, when he sees a deadly serpent coiled up near him, to make up his mind to get out of its way, or to kill it? How long does it take a man, when he sees the walls or timbers of a building tottering, and threatening to fall on him, to conclude that he had better take himself out of danger?

You are living in peril. Your souls are in danger. You have been going on thoughtlessly, and wickedly hardening your hearts; the voice of God has called often to you; and well might you cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" To every one who asks that question in sincerity and earnestness, I say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house with thee." If you would be saved, take Christ as the man of your counsel—as your best friend. Christ teaches you how to live. Say, to-night, "I will live as Christ bids me. I will cut off everything that is contrary to the commands of Christ. I will enlist under his banner."

When a man says, "I will enlist," what does he mean? Is it as if he said, "I know all about military tactics"? No; it is as if he said, "I will do, as fast as I can, what is told me." When a man turns to the Lord Jesus Christ, he does that which is equivalent to saying, "I will take thee for my Master; I will believe on thee; I will endeavor to do thy will; I will yield implicit allegiance to thee."

Now, you can do that to-night; you can do it before you leave this house; and every true man ought to do it, and will do it if he acts according to the inspirations of the highest elements of the human soul, and for his present good, and his eternal salvation.

Let every man, therefore, in whose heart arises, in the faintest degree, the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" listen to the teaching of wisdom. Do not evade your duty in the matter by saying, "I must think about it." Do not hesitate, and say, "I will go and talk with my friends." Keep asking, "What shall I do to be saved?" Do not rest till it is answered. Settle it now. Say, "I believe in my father's and mother's God; and by the help of

God, I swear, before the Highest, that from this hour I will follow the precepts of Christ, according to the strength given me, with all my might, to the end of my life."

Take hold of Christ; enlist in his army; and then, every day, do your duty like men; and you will be Christians.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou ever-blessed One, we cannot behold thee with the outward senses. We draw near to thee led by thine inspiration. Thou art drawing our affections toward thee. Our needs all call out for God. Our souls pant for him, as the hart for the water-brooks. We rejoice that it is not in vain to come, and that those who have most often sought thee are sure of the bounty of thy mercy; are sure of thine existence; are sure that thou art, and that thou art the rewarder of those who diligently seek thee. We thank thee that thou hast made it easy to come to thee. Thou art not clothed with terror. Thou art most merciful toward those who repent of their sins, and seek to do better. Thou art gracious to those who are bowed down with infirmity. Thou lendest thy strength freely; and by thy wisdom, by the inspiration of thy Spirit, our minds work, and we discern good from evil, and seek, along the way of righteousness, to fulfill all thy decrees.

Now, Lord, we pray that we may be strengthened to the duties that remain to us. Thou hast granted unto us many years, and we have seen great good. Thou hast fulfilled thy promises; and afflictions which have come in overmeasure, at times, have been sanctified by thy goodness; and thou art still a prayer-hearing God. Thou art still ready to support those who put their trust in thee; to forgive those who heartily repent of sin; and to lead those who seek divine light.

We pray, this evening, that every heart may be turned toward thee, and that each one, according to his several need, may find God present to hear and help. Make every one feel that thou art speaking his name—calling him. We pray that there may be individuals coming to thee heart by heart, soul by soul; and that each one who is in any necessity may bring all that is in him, that the eye of God may see and understand.

We beseech of thee, O Lord, that thou wilt accept our thanks that so many have been brought to a knowledge of Christ; that so many are seeking to walk in the spirit of the Master; and that thy Spirit is in them, leading them to turn again and give to others as they have received. We pray that the same mercifulness that is in thee may be in us; and that the same bountifulness that is in thee may be in us. We desire to do good as we have opportunity.

Bless, we pray thee, those who are in our schools and missions, working in all the ways where human sorrows are. Clothe them with strength, and give them comfort in their work. And while they work, wherever thou mayest call them to labor, grant that the interpretation of their work may be more and more perfect in their experience. Not only may they perform the duties which are enjoined in thy word, but may the truths of that word be interpreted in their own living consciousness.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all the churches of this city and of the great city that is near us, and upon all the churches

of our land We thank thee that we have so many who speak in thy name; so many that are pilgrims, seeking to walk the journey of faith. We pray that the number may be multiplied. May all the destitute places be filled with churches. May sanctuaries of God be built up throughout the whole country, that thy kingdom may bring with it justice, pure administration, intelligence, and more and more peacefulness among the people. And may this nation rise, not in outward strength alone, but in the strength of God. May it not stand and brutally beat down the weak. May it not be a nation of armed warriors. May its banner be love; and may its mission be peace among the nations; and may its example win men to liberty, to virtue, and to prosperity.

May thy kingdom come in all the world. We pray that the time of evil, and of selfishness, and of pride, and of war, and of superstition, and of ignorance, may pass away; and may thy nature and thy laws be more and more perfectly revealed, until the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of thee.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech thee to bless the word spoken. Grant that it may not be in vain. Bringing back the pictures of the olden time, may we find in them much to interpret the present. May we find in them many things to wean us from evil, and inspire us to good. Give us thy blessing as we sing once more. Go with us to our homes. Keep us this night, this week, all the days of our lives. Do exceeding abundantly for us more than we can ask or think. We ask it through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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